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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Periodic reports of States parties due in 1997

MEXICO

Supplementary report*

[31 August 1999]

* This report contains information supplementing the second periodic report submitted by Mexico (CRC/C/65/Add.6).

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the provisions of article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on 15 January 1998 the Government of Mexico submitted its second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention.

2. The report sent to the Committee on the Rights of the Child describes government actions and programmes designed to promote and protect children's rights under the Convention, particularly the rights of children in especially difficult circumstances.

3. Since the submission of that report, a number of activities and programmes of particular relevance to the Convention's implementation in Mexico have been carried out. The Mexican Government therefore considered it important to send the Committee, as an addendum to the report, a description of these activities and programmes, as well as others which were not included in the report but will be of particular interest to the Committee.

4. It highlights in particular the establishment of the National System for the Follow-up and Monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, following a recommendation made by the Committee after its consideration of Mexico's initial report.

5. The Government has also been paying increasing attention to the problem of child pornography and prostitution, and has adopted a Plan of Action to Prevent, Address and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which aims to strengthen action to combat this difficult problem and coordinate the action of the various government departments.

6. This addendum also includes information on the children's elections held on 6 July 1997 in order to raise Mexican children's awareness of their rights, and on the census of working children taken in more than 100 Mexican cities in order to analyse the issue and strengthen action to protect such children.

7. Information is also provided on an international seminar entitled "The girl child's right to social equity from birth", held from 5 to 7 August 1998, with the aim of strengthening the Government's action to promote and protect the rights of girls.

8. With regard to care for children in especially difficult circumstances, information is given on the progress of the inter-agency project to assist "frontier children", to whom the Government attaches particular importance in view of the large numbers involved, and on the proposed plan to eradicate child labour.

9. The Government of Mexico requests the Committee to kindly consider this addendum as an integral part of the second periodic report of Mexico submitted in January 1998.

II. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BRING FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION FULLY INTO LINE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION

Proposals to supplement or reform various provisions relating to improved protection of children's rights

10. The Mexican Government has been making great efforts to make the legislative amendments needed in order to implement fully the provisions of the Convention. A number of the reforms and initiatives undertaken to bring Mexico's federal and local legislation into line with the Convention are described below.

A. Legislative amendments to improve implementation of the Convention

11. Some important amendments, reforms and additions to various legal provisions at the federal and state levels in order to bring Mexican legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention are described below.

General Population Act

12. On 8 November 1996, the reform of article 68 of the General Population Act was published in the Diario Oficial. Previously, this article provided that civil registry judges must establish the legality of residence of any foreigners mentioned in any entry in the civil register. This reform means that foreigners no longer have to prove they were legally resident in the country when registering births promptly and registering deaths. The reform is an important step forward in consolidating the rights of children under the Constitution and the Convention since it removes obstacles preventing children's access to such basic public services as health and education, to which they are entitled as Mexicans. At the same time, it also complies with article 7 of the Convention, which provides that a child has the right to be registered immediately after birth.

Morelos State Development and Protection of Children Act

13. This Act was published in the Periódico Oficial del Estado on 13 February 1997 and is significant for its attempts to establish the bases, standards and procedures to help the children of Morelos State to develop fully and to provide for their protection includes a declaration of the fundamental rights of children (i.e., anyone below the age of 18) and recognizes children's pre-eminent right to know and be cared for by their parents, to grow up and develop in a harmonious family atmosphere, and to life, safety, privacy, personal dignity, an identity, freedom of expression, health, education, culture, social welfare and legal protection.

14. It also sets forth parents' and guardians' obligations to meet health, recreation, rest, education and nourishment needs of their children or wards, and to provide a stable, supportive family environment.

15. The Office of the Procurator for the Defence of Juveniles, an institution of the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), is empowered to monitor children's

rights, receive complaints and reports, provide free advice to victims, request the intervention of the judicial authorities in cases of such serious violations of children's rights as ill-treatment, abandonment, abuse or neglect, and impose administrative penalties on offenders.

16. In this Act, importance is attached to the involvement of the general public in protecting minors, and non-profit-making organizations and associations are given tax incentives to encourage them to take action in support of children.

Amendments to the Nuevo León State Education Act

17. A proposal has been made to establish programmes to reduce drop-out rates and grant scholarships, and to establish parents' and guardians' obligation to support their children's studies and ensure that school students are well treated.

Reforms and additions to the Oaxaca State Penal Code, Education Act, Health Act, Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure

18. On 7 February 1998, Oaxaca State published a decree amending several articles of its Education Act, Health Act, Penal Code, Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure, in order to establish conditions for a fairer and more egalitarian society, and to eradicate such phenomena as family violence and child abuse.

(a) State Education Act

19. This reform promotes equality of the individual by providing education opportunities for girls and boys, and encourages parents to complete their own schooling.

(b) State Health Act

20. These provisions encourage care for child and women victims of abuse, and the development of programmes to prevent violence and abuse within the family, and of action to promote responsible parenting.

(c) Civil Code

21. The Code is being amended with regard to recognition of children in order to protect those whose paternity is only theoretical because their parents are not married. The child's best interests are placed above adults' rights, and the unfair labelling of children as legitimate or illegitimate is replaced by a description of them as born within or outside marriage.

(d) Code of Civil Procedure

22. These reforms establish the child's right to be heard by a judge in all matters affecting him, thereby reinforcing his right of petition.

Reforms and additions to the Veracruz State Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure, and adoption of the Children's Social Welfare and Protection Act

(a) Children's Social Welfare and Protection Act

23. This Act was published in the Gaceta Oficial del Estado on 8 September 1998 and entered into force the following day. Its general provisions include the protection of the family as the basis of society and parents' obligations to their children. A child is defined as a person below the age of 18. The Act refers to children's rights and prerogatives, including the right to life, to an identity, to health, to a family, not to be discriminated against on grounds of sex, age, colour, religion, race or social status, to information, to culture, to education, to work in conditions that do not affront their dignity through reprehensible practices. It also mentions children's duties, including the duty to respect their parents and institutions and to care for and preserve the environment.

24. The same Act establishes a State Children's Social Welfare and Protection Board to coordinate, plan and monitor child welfare and protection services responsible for helping to integrate children into social activity in a full and productive way; the same system has been established at the municipal level within the State.

25. The Act also regulates the Office of the Procurator for the Defence of Juveniles, the Family and Indigenous People, a DIF body responsible for dealing with children in conflict with the criminal law, lodging appeals, receiving complaints and monitoring compliance with the Act.

26. In addition, the Act provides for social welfare and care for children in conflict with the criminal law, with the help of a Jurisdictional Young Offenders Commission, the Regional Jurisdictional Young Offenders Commissions and the Observation and Social Rehabilitation Centres, whose aim is to integrate children into a family and social environment with due regard for their health and dignity and rejecting any treatment or detention of a repressive nature. Under the Act, children in conflict with the law are defined as any minors actively involved in committing an offence; minors under the age of 16 are immune from prosecution and may not be detained in institutions intended for adults.

(b) Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure

27. A section on domestic violence has been added to the Veracruz State Civil Code, establishing obligations of mutual respect and consideration among family members and measures affording provisional protection to victims in the event of divorce or separation, and making domestic violence grounds for placing restrictions on parental authority.

State of Sonora

28. The State Education Act includes a new section defining the following offences by persons providing educational services: violations of students' physical, mental or moral integrity, and neglect of the duty to ensure the protection and care they need for their full development.

Zacatecas State Children's Rights Act

29. This Act, published on 7 May 1997, provides for the creation of suitable conditions for children's complete development, establishing specialist institutions to protect and safeguard children's rights under the Mexican Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Proposed amendments to the civil codes of the states of Guanajuato, Morelos, Nuevo León and Sonora

30. Amendments have been proposed to the civil codes of these states as regards the child's right to an identity, so as to bring them more into line with the provisions of article 7 of the Convention.

B. Full adoption, international adoption and adoption by foreigners

31. Under article 21 of the Convention, countries that recognize and/or permit adoption must ensure that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration and must provide all necessary guarantees to ensure that the adoption is permissible and authorized by the competent authorities.

32. Mexico is a party to the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which was adopted in The Hague (Netherlands) on 29 May 1993, was ratified by Mexico on 14 September 1994 and entered into force on 1 May 1995. It is also a party to the Inter-American Convention on Conflict of Laws concerning the Adoption of Minors, which was adopted in La Paz (Bolivia) on 24 May 1984, was ratified by Mexico on 12 June 1987 and entered into force on 26 May 1988.

33. In May 1998, reforms on adoption were incorporated into Mexico's legislation, giving the greatest possible protection to vulnerable children, with the aim of establishing the legal institutions of full adoption and international adoption, in addition to ordinary adoption, for which regulations have already been issued. Copies of these reforms are attached.[1]

34. Similar additions have been made to the Civil Code on Ordinary Matters for the Federal District and on Federal Matters for the Entire Republic. In addition, 17 states have reformed their civil codes and codes of civil procedure to include full adoption. As well as the Federal District, the states that have introduced such reforms are: Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Durango, México, Guanajuato , Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, Veracruz and Zacatecas. In the states of Baja California and Campeche, proposals to incorporate full adoption into the Civil Code are being discussed in Congress. The Congress of México State is also discussing reform of the Civil Code to include international adoption.

35. The Civil Code of the Federal District for Ordinary Matters and for the Entire Republic for Federal Matters which already covered adoption, was supplemented on 28 May 1998 by four

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[1] The annexes are available for consultation in the secretariat files.

new sections: general provisions; ordinary adoption; full adoption; and international adoption. The aim was to group the general provisions on adoption within a single section and the provisions on each type of adoption in three separate sections.

36. The purpose of amending the codes of civil procedure is to bring their provisions into line with substantive legislation, and to reduce procedures and time limits as far as possible so as to make the requisite adoption procedures easier and more accessible. Public concern at the lengthiness of adoption procedures should thus be allayed.

37. Full adoption gives the adoptee the status of a biological child, with the same legal implications associated with blood relationship. The adoptee thus takes his place as a true member of the family, and his relationship with the parents, children and siblings of the adoptive parents is recognized. In cases of full adoption, a document like a birth certificate is drawn up, in the same terms as the one issued to biological children (Civil Code for the Federal District, art. 86, first para.).

38. Under the rules for ordinary adoption, an adoptive parent may not marry the adoptee or his descendants, and in the case of full adoption, the same prohibition on marriage applies as in the blood relationship. Within the adoptive family, the adoptee has the same rights and obligations as a biological child, and must bear the adoptive parents' surname. In full adoption, the family ties between the adoptee and his biological parents and their family are extinguished, except as regards impediments to marriage.

39. In cases of full adoption, the civil registry will refuse to provide any type of information on the adoptee's natural family, except in the following cases and with judicial authorization:

Where there is an impediment to marriage;

When the adoptee wishes to find out about his family background, providing he has reached the age of majority; minors require the consent of the adoptive parents.

40. Full adoption is irrevocable.

41. Other additions to legislation have included the concepts of international adoption and adoption by foreigners. International adoption constitutes a way of combating traffic in children and implementing the constitutional mandate arising from Mexico's ratification of The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

"International adoption is adoption initiated by nationals of another country normally resident outside the national territory; its purpose is to place within a family a minor who is unable to find a family in his country of origin. Such adoption shall be governed by the international treaties signed and ratified by Mexico and, where appropriate, the provisions of the Civil Code. International adoptions shall always be full adoptions.

"Adoption by foreigners is adoption initiated by nationals of another country permanently resident within the national territory. Such adoptions shall be governed by the provisions of the Civil Code" (art. 410 E).

42. As regards international adoption, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has concluded coordination agreements with the state governments on adoptions, maintenance and the return of children through the Interior Ministry of each state, the state DIFs and the state procurator-general's offices. The DIFs of Baja California and Sonora states have, however, denounced these agreements.

C. Legislation to combat family violence

43. As mentioned in Mexico's second report, child abuse is one of the country's most serious social problems. The Mexican Government and civil society have made great efforts to amend federal and state legislation in order to make family violence an offence. A number of states have recently reformed, or are currently reforming, their penal codes in an attempt to address this problem. Some of those reforms and proposals are described below.

Baja California

Reforming the State Penal Code to make family violence an offence. Also proposing specific legislation on family violence.

Baja California Sur

Preliminary draft reforms to the Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure, and to the Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, on family violence.

Campeche

Proposals to reform the Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, imposing more severe penalties for child abuse. Also preparing a family violence and social welfare bill.

Colima

Family Violence (Prevention and Care) Act published in the Gaceta Oficial del Estado on 14 February 1998.

Chiapas

Family Violence (Prevention, Assistance and Care) Act published in the Periódico Oficial del Estado on 8 August 1998.

Durango

Reforms to the Civil Code on family violence published on 21 May 1998.

México

Reforms to the Penal Code under way to make child abuse an offence.

Guanajuato

Proposals for legislation on family violence.

Guerrero

Reforms being made to the state Penal Code to establish the criminal offence of family violence. Reforms relating to family violence are also being made to the Code of Criminal Procedure, Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure. The state Congress is considering drafting a bill on assistance and prevention in connection with family violence.

Morelos

Reforms to be made to the State Health Act to address the problem of family violence.

Nuevo León

Penal Code reform to be drafted making family violence an offence.

Oaxaca

New title added to the Penal Code making the criminal offence of violence a separate offence, in order to eradicate the problem of child abuse and violence against women.

Puebla

Decree to reform, add and repeal a number of provisions of the State Code of Social Protection published on 2 September 1998. The main changes are: definition of family violence as an offence, provisions concerning stealing of infants, and trafficking in and abduction of minors.

Querétaro

State Family Violence (Prevention and Punishment) Act published on 31 December 1997.

San Luis Potosí

Decree establishing the Family or Domestic Violence (Prevention and Care) Act published on 28 July 1998. Family violence made an offence in the Penal Code and new title XI added on "Offences against the family", with a chapter 8 on "Family violence".

Under the decree of 28 July 1998, violence as grounds for divorce was added to title VI of chapter III on "Family violence". It also places an obligation on judges to listen to the views of minors before handing down a decision in divorce cases.

Sonora

Reforms being made to the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure and to the Civil Code and the Code of Civil Procedure in the area of family violence. A new chapter entitled "Programme to combat family violence" is to be added to title X of the State Health Act, establishing a system of medical, legal and social information on cases of family violence.

Tabasco

Proposals for a Family Violence (Prevention, Care and Punishment) Act.

Tlaxcala

Proposals for reform of the Penal Code, making family violence an offence.

Veracruz

Family Violence (Assistance and Prevention) Act

Published in the Gaceta Oficial del Estado on 8 September 1998; entered into force on 9 September 1998. Article 2, paragraph 3, defines family violence as the repeated use of physical or moral force against a family member by a person related to him by blood or civil ties, marriage or consensual union, which violates his physical, mental or sexual integrity, even if it is not defined as an offence in other legislation.

Under the Act, it is the responsibility of the State Executive to provide assistance and to prevent family violence; the State must discharge its duties with the support of the State Board for Assistance and Prevention in respect of Family Violence. The Board is composed of the State Governor, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, the Procurator-General of Justice and the Director of the State DIF System. Its mandate, under article 7, is to propose and draft a Comprehensive Programme of Assistance and Prevention in respect of Family Violence within the State, organize sensitization and training programmes for public servants, create a State registry of family violence, and encourage cooperation and coordination among public and private institutions in addressing this serious problem.

In the same way, a chapter entitled "Family Violence" has been added to the Penal Code establishing a sentence of between six months' and four years' imprisonment, loss of maintenance rights and mandatory psychotherapeutic treatment for anyone committing the offence of family violence if a complaint is brought by the victim, unless the victim is a minor or incompetent.

D. Corruption of minors, child prostitution and pornography: legislative reforms

44. The Mexican Government has recently submitted proposals for legislative reforms to protect children from pornography and child prostitution, as part of a strategy to combat these despicable practices.

Penal Code of the Federal District for Ordinary Matters and for the Entire Republic for Federal Matters

45. On 5 October 1998, a proposal for the reform of articles 201, 203, 205 and 208 of the Penal Code of the Federal District for Ordinary Matters and for the Entire Republic for Federal Matters was referred to the Chamber of Deputies' Justice Commission.

46. Under the reform of article 201, the age of a victim of the offence of corruption of minors would be raised from 16 to 18; in addition, the term "homosexuality" would be replaced by the term "sexual practices", in order to avoid confusion and to avoid offending a particular sector of society.

47. A paragraph would also be added to article 201 stating that the corruption of minors is not understood to mean preventive, educational or any other type of programmes devised by public, private or social institutions for the purposes of sexual or reproductive health education, or for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies.

48. A new offence is to be defined under article 201 bis in order to punish child pornography. Under the same article, persons inciting others to acquire any object propagating child pornography, whether or not for financial gain, will also be punished.

49. Anyone procuring or in any way facilitating the use of one or more minors under the age of 18, with or without their consent, in physical exhibitionism or obscene or sexual acts, for the purposes of video recording, photography or publication in the print or electronic media, whether or not for financial gain, would be liable to between 5 and 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 1,000 and 2,000 days' minimum wage.

50. Anyone photographing, recording or printing acts of physical exhibitionism or obscene or sexual acts involving one or more minors under the age of 18, with or without their consent, would be liable to between 10 and 14 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 500 and 3,000 days' minimum wage. Anyone preparing, reproducing, selling, renting, exhibiting, publishing or transmitting material portraying such acts, whether or not for financial gain, would be liable to the same penalty.

51. Anyone who, directly or through a third party, directs, administers or supervises any kind of criminal association for the purposes of the above-mentioned acts would be liable to between 8 and 16 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 3,000 and 10,000 days' wage, and confiscation of the materials. Child pornography is defined in the final paragraphs of article 201 bis.

52. Under article 201 bis (1), which is new, any public servant found guilty of the offence of child pornography or corruption of minors or legally incompetent persons is punishable.

53. Article 201 bis (2) provides for progressive sentencing, for the offences of corruption of minors or child pornography, depending on the minor's age. The sentence will be increased by up to one third if the victim of the offence is under 16, and by up to one half if the victim is under 12, since he or she is considered more vulnerable.

54. Article 201 bis (3) establishes penalties for persons guilty of child prostitution. Anyone promoting, publicizing, issuing invitations, facilitating or in any way arranging for a person or persons to travel within or outside the country for the purposes of having sexual relations with minors below the age of 18 will be liable to between 5 and 14 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 100 and 2,000 days' minimum wage.

55. Article 203 has been added to punish persons involved in organized crime who take part in the offences of corruption of minors or incompetent persons, child pornography and the sexual prostitution of minors. Articles 205 and 208 are being amended to provide for progressive sentencing. Article 205 now states that anyone promoting or facilitating the practice of prostitution, or procuring or providing a person for that purpose, within or outside the national territory, shall be liable to between 5 and 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 100 and 1,000 days' minimum wage. If the perpetrator uses violence or takes advantage of any official position he may hold, the sentence will be increased by up to one half. Article 208 states that anyone promoting, abetting, organizing or permitting sex trafficking of a minor below the age of 18 will be liable to between 8 and 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 100 and 1,000 days' minimum wage.

Federal Code of Criminal Procedure and Code of Criminal Procedure for the Federal District

56. Articles 194 of the Federal Code of Criminal Procedure and 268 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for the Federal District are being reformed in order to characterize the offences provided for in the Penal Code of the Federal District for Ordinary Matters and for the Entire Republic for Federal Matters (arts. 201 bis, 201 bis (1), 201 bis (2), 201 bis (3) and 203), as serious offences, as they have a significant effect on society's fundamental values.

57. These reforms give effect to the provisions of article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges States parties to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

58. This proposal was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on 12 December 1998 and referred to the Senate, which is expected to approve it during its extraordinary session in February 1999.

Act establishing Minimum Standards concerning the Social Rehabilitation of Convicted Prisoners

59. The purpose of articles 8 and 16 of the Act establishing Minimum Standards concerning the Social Rehabilitation of Convicted Prisoners is to increase the penalties for persons who finance and support activities such as the prostitution of minors and child pornography.

60. This change means that anyone consenting to, permitting or abetting the exploitation of a minor through sex trafficking will be liable to between 8 and 12 years' imprisonment. In addition, anyone inducing or coercing a minor to engage in physical exhibitionism or to perform obscene or sexual acts or acts of prostitution or homosexuality to be recorded or published in any medium for financial gain shall be liable to between 10 and 14 years' imprisonment.

Proposal for reform of the Penal Code of Campeche

61. The State DIF has submitted to the State Congress a proposal for reform of the State Penal Code making child pornography an offence and providing for a penalty of between 5 and 10 years' imprisonment for anyone committing such an offence against a minor.

Reforms to the Penal Code of San Luis Potosí

62. Amendments to the State Penal Code in respect of corruption of minors were published on 31 October 1998.

III. INFORMATION ON THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT IN FULFILMENT OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION

A. National System for the Follow-up and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

63. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.13) on Mexico's initial report in 1994, recommended the establishment of machinery to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the federal, state and municipal levels, in view of the fact that the Convention embraces principles and provisions that are not fully taken into account in the National Programme of Action for Children. In that regard, DIF, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with cooperation from the Mexican section of UNICEF, drew up a proposal for the establishment of such monitoring machinery. In July 1988, President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León approved the establishment of the system for monitoring the Convention. It should be mentioned that this monitoring machinery operates in parallel with the National Committee which supervises the application of the National Programme of Action for Children.

64. The National System for the Follow-up and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention will be made up of a central federal commission, thematic committees and committees at the state level. DIF will be the coordinating agency for the system. The central federal commission will have the tasks of coordinating information and fostering actions and

recommendations. The thematic committees will be set up to reflect the topics covered in the Convention: survival and development, participation and protection. Their tasks will involve integration of various themes, information and analysis of actions and recommendations. The state committees, which will be operational in character, will analyse information and support processes for publicizing the rights of the child and actions for the benefit of children; in addition, they will assess compliance with the Convention at the federal level, and will support the setting up of equivalent machinery at the local and municipal levels.

65. Government representation at the various levels will involve the following agencies: DIF, the National Programme of Action for Children, the Ministry of Health (SSA), the Ministry of Education (SEP), the National or State Water Commission, the National Commission for Women (CONMUJER), the Office of the Attorney-General of the Republic and the Council for Minors, the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESO), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) and the legislative committees for children (10-12 members). The autonomous public agencies will be represented by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District (CDHDF) (5-6 members). From civil society there will be representatives of universities, the mass media, professional associations, teachers' organizations, and associations of businessmen and parents (10-12 members).

66. The central federal commission will be composed of around 30 members. For the thematic committees and the state committees the representation of government agencies, autonomous public agencies and civil society will be maintained.

67. It is important to point out that in July 1998, when the President gave his agreement for the establishment of the National System for the Follow-up and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention, the Director-General of DIF sent a letter to each of the state governors informing them of the President's agreement and inviting them to set up committees.

68. To date state committees have been set up under the System for the Follow-up and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention in Nayarit, as recorded in the Periódico Oficial on 19 August 1998, and in Oaxaca, as recorded in the Periódico Oficial on 7 October 1998. Committees are expected to be set up in each of the states in due course.

69. This monitoring system contributes to the realization of the basic principles of the Convention, and in particular the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, and participation by children in decision-making and in the formulation, development and implementation of all public policies. It can also play a role in evaluating the possible impact of proposed legislation, policies and public programmes, and in coordinating efforts to bring Mexican legislation into line with the Convention.

70. At the international level efforts to publicize actions by the Government of Mexico would be facilitated.

B. Plan of Action to Prevent, Address and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

71. The problem of prostitution in Mexico was not a major one until a few years ago. Today this phenomenon is increasingly making itself felt and involving more and more boys and girls.

72. Prostitution among boys and girls has various causes, including poverty, marginalization, ill-treatment, abuse, family break-up, ignorance, sex discrimination, irresponsible sexual behaviour on the part of men and migratory flows.

73. Over and above these causes there are other factors which play a role in the growth of the problem of prostitution and hamper measures to address, prevent and eradicate it promptly. These are: corruption among various parties involved, including the members of the victim's family, and persons in authority at various levels; the lack of an appropriate legal framework defining this practice precisely; and the emergence of increasingly well-organized criminal networks which control the commercial sexual exploitation of children, inter alia. There is no doubt that in some cities conditions are more propitious than in others for the growth of this phenomenon - the major metropolises, the cities experiencing the highest economic growth, border cities and those which derive the bulk of their income from tourism.

74. Against this background, the Government of Mexico, together with a variety of organizations and with the support of international agencies, such as UNICEF, plans to pursue efforts to provide all-round responses in various social milieux which offer a solution to the problem. In this way, the Government of Mexico, through DIF, has drawn up an Inter-Agency Plan of Action to Prevent, Address and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to meet the need to take legislative, administrative and preventive steps to protect children from sexual and economic exploitation and thus comply fully with the provisions of article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

75. In this regard, the Plan includes a strategy with various components:

First, preparation of a diagnosis to gauge the magnitude of the phenomenon, locate it and identify groups requiring immediate attention;

Review of all legal provisions for the protection of children with a view to identifying gaps, thus making it possible to propose reforms and additions designed to eradicate the phenomenon;

Efforts to retrieve and reintegrate children involved in these practices, by means of urgent steps to rescue them and give them proper care;

Creation of awareness throughout society concerning this problem, the factors which cause it, and especially the physical and mental effects it produces in children;

Immediate training for all those involved in providing care for children;

Prevention and monitoring activities, including the creation of promptly functioning machinery for reporting cases and protecting victims, as well as the preparation of educational material for children, parents and teachers;

Lastly, fostering participation by children and young people in publicizing the rights of children, and the creation of networks of children and young people for the defence of their rights.

76. For the implementation of this strategy, agreement has been reached in principle on various courses of action, such as:

The preparation of a diagnosis of the situation and the development of a database on child prostitution and pornography;

The devising of a model of inter-agency intervention for the full recovery of child victims;

The opening of a larger number of public prosecutor's offices specializing in child-related matters;

The setting-up of inter-agency machinery for monitoring and reporting cases in situ;

The development of victim and witness protection programmes;

Review of the legal framework with a view to proposing a package of legislative reforms;

Design and implementation of a publicity campaign for purposes of prevention and awareness-creation among Mexicans and foreign visitors;

The establishment of a forum for public consultation with participation by legislative bodies at the federal and state levels.

Once this plan is initiated, the Government of Mexico will possess a more extensive armoury for tackling the problems of child prostitution and all forms of sexual or commercial exploitation of children in a more effective manner. A copy of the Plan of Action is attached.

C. Inter-Agency National Commission to Eradicate the Sexual Exploitation of Children

77. The Inter-Agency National Commission to Eradicate the Sexual Exploitation of Children is made up of representatives of SRE, the Ministry of the Interior, SSA, the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR), DIF - acting as coordinator, PGR, the Procurator's Office of the Federal District (PGJDF), CONMUJER, CNDH and CDHDF; the Congress of the Union and the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District, the non-governmental organizations Casa Alianza, Casa Ecuador, C.M. de Apoyo a la Niñez, Coordinación del Programa a favor de los Niños de la Calle, EDIAC, EDNICA, Foro de Apoyo Mutuo, G.I. Mujer, Trabajo y Pobreza, MUSA and THAIS, and UNICEF.

78. The tasks of the Commission are as follows:

Coordination of institutional capabilities, resources and experience to prevent, address and eradicate the phenomenon;

Establishment of groups of specialists to pursue various activities to be determined;

Continuous follow-up of progress in the work of the groups of specialists;

Evaluation of public and private policies, programmes and actions aimed at preventing, addressing and eradicating the phenomenon;

Formulation of localized work strategies;

Fostering of machinery for public consultation with a view to the analysis and drafting of legislative proposals;

Proposal of reforms and additions or new legal measures to the legislative bodies at the federal and state levels;

Preparation and dissemination of national and international reports on the subject;

Familiarization with and expression of views on recommendations, reports or proposals emanating from intergovernmental or non-governmental international agencies.

79. The Commission will be divided into the following working groups:

Legislative Working Group: Composed of representatives of the Senate Commission on Children, Young People and the Elderly, SRE, CNDH, CDHDF, the Federal District Legislative Assembly, the Mexican Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, the Justice Commission of the Chamber of Deputies of the LVII Legislature, the Equity and Gender Commission of the Senate of the LVII Legislature;

Working Group on Diagnosis and Information: It is made up of representatives of the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Interdisciplinary Group on Women, Labour and Poverty, Spaces for Total Development, CONMUJER, the Legislative Assembly, Educación con el Niño de la Calle (EDNICA) and Colectivo Mexicano de Apoyo a la Niñez;

Working Group on Awareness Creation and Training Campaigns: Composed of representatives of the Foro de Apoyo Mutuo, CONMUJER, the PGJDF Temporary Shelter, Office of the Director-General of the Family Division of the Government Procurator's Office (PGJDF), Fundación Casa Alianza, CNDH, SECTUR, Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida and MUSAE;

Working Group on Monitoring and Supervision Machinery: Made up of representatives of PGJDF, MUSAE, SRE and the Federal District Legislative Assembly;

Working Group on Intervention, Recovery and Rehabilitation Models: Composed of representatives of Casa Ecuador, the Fundación Casa Alianza, CDHDF, MUSAE and Spaces for Total Development.

80. On 24 November 1998 the second National Congress on Child Abuse was held. Progress made by the National Committee was described.

D. Programme for the Protection of the Rights of Child Victims of Exploitation and the Sex Trade in the La Merced District

81. In November 1998 the Centro de Atención Integral (CAIS) was established as the core part of the Programme for the Protection of the Rights of Child Victims of Exploitation and the Sex Trade in the La Merced District. This area, located in the heart of a densely populated neighbourhood, benefits from multi-agency participation on the part of the Mexico City government in the shape of the Delegación Venustiano Carranza, the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Iztapalapa, the Junta de Asistencia Privada and the Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral.

82. Up to the period covered by this report, CAIS had held meetings with eight organized groups of female sex workers with the aim of preventing minors from joining their ranks. It participated in the establishment of a network of non-governmental organizations whose activities are aimed at improving the quality of life of girls working in the La Merced district and promoting strategies for joint action which will contribute to preventing child prostitution.

83. In carrying out its activities, and bearing in mind that the great majority of female sex workers embark on such activities during childhood and adolescence, CAIS initiated a preventive programme involving therapy sessions with 12 child victims of sexual exploitation. The purpose of this activity is to bolster their self-esteem and strengthen their own identity, so as to prevent them from returning to the networks which traffic in children.

84. CAIS seeks to serve as a means of ensuring that Mexico will eradicate the sexual exploitation of children. Its proposed programme includes medical care, legal advice, therapy, human rights training, and the continuation of the research begun by the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District in 1996 on the exploitation of, and sex trade in, minors in the La Merced district.

E. Programme for Education, Health and Nutrition

85. The Programme for Education, Health and Nutrition (PROGRESA) was initiated following Presidential approval on 6 August 1997, to tackle the various causes of poverty by means of a comprehensive, continuous and long-term approach. It seeks to reach all regions where there is a concentration of families experiencing extreme poverty so as to secure improvements in their nutrition, health and education, particularly for children and women.

86. Currently the Programme covers around one and a half million homes experiencing extreme poverty in 34,000 localities in 1,450 municipalities in 28 states. By the end of 1999 the target of 2.3 million families will have been reached.

87. Among the population living in poverty, children account for the majority. Out of every 100 Mexicans, roughly 28 are poor; out of every 100 children aged under 10, 40 are living in poverty. Consequently, one of PROGRESA's main objectives is to secure a substantial improvement in education, health and nutrition, particularly for children and their mothers.

88. The Programme is composed of three closely related elements:

Educational support to enable children and young people to complete their primary education. Encouraging their enrolment and regular attendance at school, and participation by parents in ensuring that they benefit more fully from their classes;

Basic health care for all members of the family, promoting change in the orientation and use of the health services, leading to a preventive approach. Encouragement of self-help in health and proper attention to nutrition in the family;

Support for improving the diet and nutritional standards of poor families, highlighting its purpose of improving the intake of food by the family, principally children and women.

Educational support

89. PROGRESA encourages school attendance by children and young people. In particular, it offers young people who have dropped their studies a chance to return to school. It is estimated that the level of enrolment in secondary schools catering to the target population rose by over 20 per cent compared with the previous year.

90. In order to improve school attendance and performance, the Programme provides the following support:

Scholarships for every child aged under 18 between the third level of primary and the third level of secondary school. The amount involved rises as the child progresses, and at secondary level scholarships for girls are set higher than those for boys in order to overcome the segregation from which girls and young women suffer and thereby help to raise expectations for their advancement and lower their high drop-out rate.

Teaching materials, or help in purchasing them, for children between the third primary level and third secondary level.

91. Financial assistance in the field of education is channelled through mothers. By the end of the school year 1997/98, 400,000 monthly payments had been made to as many pupils.

Health support

92. The health component is designed to broaden and improve coverage in primary schools and thereby reduce the incidence of disease among family members. While activities are aimed at all members of the target families, special attention is paid to the most vulnerable sectors of the population - pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and children aged under five. Three specific strategies have been drawn up for these purposes:

Free provision of a basic package of health services;

Prevention of malnutrition among children, from the gestation stage, through the provision of food supplements;

Encouragement and improvement of self-help in family and community health by means of the provision of information and training in health, nutrition and hygiene.

93. The strategies relating to the basic package of health services where children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are concerned are:

Care during pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium;

Monitoring of infant nutrition and growth;

Immunizations;

Prevention and care of cases of diarrhoea in the home;

Anti-parasite treatment;

Prevention and care of respiratory infections;

Prevention and control of tuberculosis;

Community training in self-help in the field of health.

94. In the localities where the Programme operates, visits for the purpose of monitoring the nutritional status of children rose by about 20 per cent over the previous year.

95. Similarly, 770,000 children aged under five are receiving food supplements. Food supplement packages have also been distributed for children and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers. This daily supplement supplies 100 per cent of the micronutrient requirement for these groups and 20 per cent of the calories they need.

96. Medical visits were arranged for children aged under five through the health services in each state and the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)-Solidarity, enabling their growth and development to be monitored closely. Food supplement packages were also distributed for children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

97. The Programme also provides monthly cash support to recipient families to help them to improve the quantity and diversity of their food intake and thereby enhance their nutritional state. This support is given directly to the mother, who is best placed to know and meet the needs of the family group. On the basis of the results of interviews conducted to monitor and evaluate the Programme, this support has been found to be used first and foremost to buy food and, together with the scholarships, to buy clothes, shoes and school supplies for the children.

98. PROGRESA seeks to induce a sense of responsibility and active participation by parents and all family members to the benefit of children and young people in order to improve their education, health and nutrition.

99. In order to receive the educational support, parents must enrol their children in school and ensure they attend regularly. It is hoped that this, together with the school support, will guarantee their attendance and ensure that the pupils supported draw maximum benefit and improve their performance.

100. Pupils wishing to receive a scholarship must have at least an 85 per cent attendance record during the school year.

101. In order to be entitled to receive food support, recipient families must undergo periodic health checks, and the mothers and fathers must attend health education sessions. In this way the support is linked to preventive health care.

102. The cash support furnished by PROGRESA is adjusted every six months, in January and July, in line with the national price index for the basic basket of products.

103. In pursuing its activities, the Programme enjoys the support of the authorities and agencies in each state within the context of the agreements for social development. PROGRESA subscribes to the joint commitment on the part of the authorities at the federal and state levels to take the steps and institute the coordination needed to provide support to those in greatest need. It encourages participation by society through respect for the diversity and social and cultural characteristics of the communities.

F. Food programmes for children

104. The National Development Plan for 1995-2000 sets as priority aims of the social strategy offering and extending opportunities for individual and community advancement in a context of equity and justice, and the full exercise of constitutional rights and guarantees, while raising the welfare and quality of life of Mexicans and, first and foremost, reducing poverty and social exclusion.

105. The programmes of the National DIF System constitute an instrument designed to make a significant contribution to achieving the goals set out in the National Development Programme for 1995-2000, particularly by helping to lower poverty levels and raising the standard of living of broad sectors of the population.

106. Where the child population is concerned, the National DIF System offers programmes which contain major activities designed to tackle the obstacles arising from situations of poverty and marginalization. These programmes are targeted on Mexican children who are in highly vulnerable situations, facing especially adverse circumstances which limit and block to a considerable extent the options and choices they need to achieve all-round, harmonious development.

107. As regards food aid, the programmes designed, operated, coordinated, regulated and evaluated by DIF form merely the point of entry or starting point for access to a range of activities and options offered by the other programmes in the system, which focus on a variety of areas, including education, health, building citizenship, psycho-social matters or legal matters. The common thread in all of them is the strengthening of family and community skills with the aim of preventing or countering processes which lead to social exclusion.

1. School Meals Programme

108. The goals set in 1995, when the present Government entered office, were as follows:

The serving of 4 million meals a day nationwide by the year 2000;

Support for initiatives which provide for even-handed treatment of boy and girl pupils, and for children under five who have yet to enter the education system;

Initiation of a process of community organization and participation through the encouragement and strengthening of the hot meal service, giving priority to delivery in rural areas;

Promotion and strengthening of the country's cuisine, through the inclusion of dishes from each region or state.

109. The School Meals Programme covers the whole country; 1,923 out of a total of 2,419 municipalities are served, plus 16 municipalities in the Federal District, amounting to 80 per cent of the country's municipalities. In 1995, 1.9 million meals were served each day. This figure rose substantially to 4,409,249 in 1998. This means that in the period 1995-1998 growth of over 200 per cent was achieved, thereby already reaching the target set for the year 2000.

110. The resources of the School Meals Programme derive from federal funds (63 per cent) and states and municipalities (the remaining 37 per cent).

111. The programme offers two options - a hot meal or a cold meal. Of the total of 4,409,249 meals served each day around the country, 2,835,021 (64 per cent) are cold meals and 1,574,228 (36 per cent) hot meals.

112. By promoting the hot meal option, it has been possible to generate a process of participation by citizens, through the establishment of committees and the involvement of over 400,000 mothers who help to prepare the meals every day. They also join in other activities and programmes designed to strengthen the family.

113. Priority is given to states which have the highest malnutrition indices - notably Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz, México, Guerrero, Puebla, Yucatán and Hidalgo. Together these states account for 42 per cent of the total number of school meals served every day.

114. Of the 117 municipalities requiring urgent attention, 85 per cent (100 municipalities) are covered. Of the municipalities regarded as being extremely vulnerable, 86 per cent (429) are covered. In addition, 403 indigenous municipalities are covered by this programme. Lastly, 16 per cent of the municipalities identified as suffering from net emigration are covered.

115. This programme involves considerable coordination with the Ministry of Education (SEP) in serving school meals in 10,000 kindergartens and 15,000 primary schools.

2. Social Food Aid to Families Programme

116. The aim of this programme is to provide support to families in highly vulnerable situations: a monthly stock of food is provided for children aged under five, pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly and the disabled in such families. The target set for the period 1994-2000 is to cover 2 million families, who are supplied with a monthly family stock containing basic food products. The programme covers the whole country and operates in 1,633 municipalities out of a total of 2,419, in addition to the 16 municipalities in the Federal District.

117. Currently 1,388,000 food parcels are distributed each month, of which 132,171 go to families in indigenous municipalities, 336,733 to families in highly vulnerable municipalities and 58,779 to families in municipalities classified as requiring urgent help. The remainder are sent to municipalities where there are families at risk.

118. The states receiving the greatest number of food parcels are those which are deemed to require priority attention: Veracruz, Puebla, Michoacán, Jalisco and México, among others.

119. In order to implement and develop the programmes of the National DIF System, use is made of a dairy formula, which is given to children under five suffering from malnutrition.

3. Programme of Soup Kitchens and Integral Services Units

120. The purpose of this programme is to improve nutritional standards among highly vulnerable groups living in neglected low-income urban areas and in rural and indigenous areas. The states on which attention is focused are: Tabasco, Chiapas, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos and Tlaxcala, primarily in municipalities and localities where mortality, morbidity and malnutrition levels are high. Efforts are concentrated on children aged under six, pregnant women, the elderly and persons suffering from nutritional deficiencies.

121. Currently the programme covers 519,842 people throughout the country, with 6,067 kitchens in 1,159 municipalities (48 per cent of the total number of municipalities) and 14 municipalities in the Federal District.

122. The basic infrastructure of the programme involves two options - "rural kitchens" operating in indigenous and/or rural localities, and "traditional kitchens" operating in low-income urban areas.

123. The programme is designed to provide community centres which, in addition to preparing food (especially hot meals), offer basic services and organize various community activities such as literacy programmes, nutritional guidance, vaccination campaigns and care groups for the elderly, all of which are intended to raise family living standards.

124. The activities mentioned above involve considerable coordination within the National DIF System and other agency programmes. At the inter-agency level, literacy programmes are organized jointly with the National Adult Education Institute, while the care groups for the elderly are organized jointly with the National Institute for the Elderly (INSEN), and priority health campaigns are coordinated by the Ministry of Health, among others.

G. National Programme to Combat Family Violence, 1999-2000

125. Violence within the family is a phenomenon which generally goes unreported and unpublicized. There is no machinery for collecting information which would provide a complete picture of the problem, so that it has not been possible to gauge its dimensions reliably. However, various individual governmental and non-governmental sources give grounds for believing that this is a very widespread phenomenon.

126. On 4 March 1999, the National Programme to Combat Family Violence, 1999-2000, was introduced in order to focus all-round attention on the phenomenon of violence in the family.

127. This programme is the fruit of a Presidential order for which CONMUJER is the executing agency. The following governmental agencies are also involved: SEGOB, PGR, DIF, SRE, SSA, SEP, INSEN, the National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Computer Science, the National Population Council and civil society.

128. The legal basis for the programme is to be found in article 4 of the Constitution, which provides that men and women are equal before the law, and that parents have a duty to meet the needs of children and preserve their physical and mental health.

129. The aims of the programme are: to take steps to prevent and eradicate violence in the family; to institute the values of respect for the dignity of the individual and peaceful communal living; to establish a system for detecting cases of violence in the family; to establish a system of care for persons involved in violence in the family; to establish a system of information and evaluation; and to create a legal framework in this area. The programme is attached.

IV. CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Child workers

1. Census of child and teenage workers in 100 towns and cities

130. Article 32 of the Convention establishes the obligation of States parties to protect boys and girls from performing any work harmful to their health, education or development and also to provide for minimum ages for admission to employment and to regulate the conditions of employment.

131. As already mentioned in the report sent to the Committee in January 1998, child labour in Mexico basically occurs in the informal sector of the economy and very rarely in the formal sector, which means that most child workers do their work without social or legal recognition, without access to social security benefits and without the protection of the necessary occupational health and safety measures.

132. Much child labour is a clandestine or disguised phenomenon, which makes it difficult to quantify it accurately, to acquire a more detailed knowledge of its characteristics and, hence to design more appropriate public policies to respond to the problem.

133. Given this situation, in 1997 DIF considered it advisable to carry out a census of girl, boy and teenage workers in 100 Mexican towns and cities, with the aim of identifying the problem more closely and learning more about it. The study gave a total of 114,497 child workers in the informal sector, notably in the streets and other public areas, supermarkets, different types of markets, cemeteries and bus stations. The census did not include Mexico City, but the total number of child workers in Mexico as a whole, including the capital, is estimated to be about 140,000.

134. The following facts emerged from the study. Of the 114,000 or so child workers, 68.2 per cent were working in 30 cities, ranging from 7,264 in Guadalajara and 1,188 in Hermosillo. The remainder were working in the other 70 towns and cities. The former category included the large conurbations, the industrial centres, the main frontier cities and the largest tourist resorts.

135. This information demonstrates the need for separate policies for cities with low numbers of child workers (average number 500) and for cities with large numbers, where the average is 2,500. In the former category, it is possible to devise strategies based on care targeted at each child and his family.

136. Some 24 per cent of children work in large avenues or at crossroads, 52 per cent in public areas such as markets, parks, squares and monuments and outside hotels, hospitals, schools, cinemas, theatres and sports grounds, and the remaining 24 per cent work as assistants in self-service shops.

137. They perform the following types of activities: bootblacks, windscreen cleaners, artistic activities, car-minders, etc. on the streets (13 per cent); production or sale of small articles,

artisans, ticket sellers, newsboys, itinerant vendors, etc. (24 per cent); activities related to traditional sectors, stevedores, rubbish collectors, fixed vendors, helping pedestrians, etc. (18 per cent); formal activities such as shop assistants (24 per cent); begging (6.6 per cent); accompanying adults or older children engaging in the above-mentioned activities (17 per cent).

138. Of the total number of child workers, 30 per cent are female.

139. One of the most important findings was that, contrary to the previously held opinion that child workers had severed their family links, over 90 per cent of children working in the streets and public areas maintain those links.

140. During the past 10 years, the Government of Mexico, in conjunction with many NGOs, has made substantial efforts to deal with this group of children through the construction of homes and strategies for their reincorporation in the family. In the light of the results of the study, it is proposed to revise and adapt policies and programmes in order to strengthen intra-family links, to promote the access of these boys and girls to higher levels of education, gradually disengaging them from work, and to continue using the civic organizations as a basis for rescuing from the streets and child labour those minors who had severed their family links, through the promotion of hostels providing assistance services for them.

141. At present, at the national level through its Programme of Care for Children and Adolescents at Risk and an affirmative-action strategy incorporating preventive measures, rehabilitation and social integration, DIF is dealing with approximately 59,000 minors considered as being street workers, street children or at risk, i.e. approximately 36 per cent of the assessed total.

142. This effort is being undertaken in 564 municipalities in the major cities, through a chain of 99 centres for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (MECED), 800 community workers assisting children and a package of 4,858 grants to help children to remain in or return to school or to provide them with an occupational training alternative.

143. Thanks to the results of this census, the Mexican Government will be able to establish the most appropriate institutional and legislative strategies with the aim of reducing and eradicating the very serious problem of child labour (by both boys and girls) in our county.

144. The final results of this census were presented in June 1999 and are attached to the present report, together with the methodological guidebook in accordance with which the study was carried out.

2. Participation in the Global March Against Child Labour

145. On the occasion of the visit to Mexico by the participants in the Global March Against Child Labour, an Inter-Ministerial Commission was established, comprising DIF, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, with the aim of learning about policies and proposals and explaining the position of Mexico on this issue.

146. In this connection, the Commission presented a document containing the Mexican Government's position. This document was sent to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

147. In addition, a committee comprising civil and public organizations was established in Mexico with the aim of mobilizing efforts to protect and promote the rights of all boys and girls, especially the right to receive a quality education free of charge, and to be freed from economic exploitation and any kind of work prejudicial to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. In order to achieve this purpose a mass celebration was organized on 1 May in the Alameda Central in the Federal District, 426 boys, girls, young people and ordinary citizens participated in this artistic-cultural event, which was organized by the Ministry of Education, the national DIF, DIF-DF, the Mexican Child Support Group, the Legislative Assembly, THAIS, the Confederation of Mexican Workers, UNICEF, the Cas Alianza Foundation, MAMA, the National Human Rights Commission and other institutions.

3. Position of the Mexican Government on child labour, as expressed on the occasion of the Global March Against Child Labour

148. The Mexican Government has placed the phenomenon of child labour at the centre of its concerns and has accordingly formulated a position on this issue.

149. In Mexico, the participation of children in economic activities with the aim of obtaining remuneration stems from various causes, including poverty, the adoption of family survival mechanisms, the increase in migratory flows, and the presence of extreme, reprehensible forms of abuse or exploitation.

150. As already noted, in most cases children work without social recognition and, since they are in situations not covered by labour legislation, without legal protection, without access to social security, and unprotected by occupational health and safety measures. Consequently, children confront risks which jeopardize their health, education and rights, spoiling their enjoyment of childhood and endangering their physical and emotional health.

151. In these circumstances, the Mexican Government holds the following views:

The following social requirements are embodied in our Constitution: prohibition of work by children under the age of 14; protection for employed children between the ages of 14 and 16; limitations on the employment of children between the ages of 16 and 18;

The types of child labour which continue to exist, prompted by the need for remuneration, and including child labour consistent with the law, must be viewed as a social phenomenon that can only be confronted through a process combining comprehensive, coordinated and inter-agency activities. These should include the active participation of society and be aimed at resolving the imbalances and social and economic causes that give rise to child labour;

In order to deal with the complex and acute series of problems involved, the Federal Executive is promoting, through the National Programme of Action for Children (1995-2000), a comprehensive policy covering health activities, education, action to

combat poverty, family integration, protection and defence of children's rights, and action to obtain justice, in order to enable boys and girls to achieve well-being and the harmonious development of all their faculties;

The prime areas for the comprehensive development of children are the family and the school. In this connection, as provided for in article 3 of the Constitution, primary education and secondary education are compulsory. Consequently, no other activity may limit or prevent the completion of this education, as provided for in the Federal Labour Act;

Child labour is a global phenomenon which occurs in both developed and developing countries. Consequently, we oppose and condemn any type of pressure which, for this reason, may take the form of economic or trade barriers.

152. The Government of Mexico has taken the following decisions:

To continue working, in conjunction with society as a whole, on substantive measures to prevent minors from engaging in activities which jeopardize their physical and emotional health and their dignity as persons, and, in particular, to protect them against such reprehensible forms of exploitation as prostitution, pornography and child servitude;

To step up all action aimed at curbing the participation of minors in activities in unhealthy or unsafe environments and in the informal sector;

To enhance the quality of the supervision and inspection of child labour, especially in branches and activities under the responsibility of local authorities;

To promote family support programmes which consolidate, within the family, the values of tolerance, communal living and respect, family links, and the exercise of the rights of boys and girls, as the best means of averting social and community disintegration and enabling families to become areas of protection and security for their members;

To strengthen health promotion measures, such as universal vaccination, prevention of acute respiratory and diarrhoeic diseases, undernourishment and malnutrition, for child workers, ensuring for them and their families access to services through the National Health System;

To promote specialized campaigns for the preventive care, attention and orientation of children and adolescents who - because of their working conditions, particularly when they engage in informal, clandestine or dangerous activities - are subject to various social risks, such as accident, disability, addiction, early pregnancy, ill-treatment, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases;

To offer educational options and support geared to the situation, performance and characteristics of child workers, with the aim of guaranteeing their entry into and

continued attendance at school, averting school failure and promoting the completion of their primary education, and also occupational training alternatives for children over the age of 14;

To promote legislative measures and to adopt such social, administrative and occupational measures as may be necessary in order to ensure the establishment and enhancement of the applicable legal framework; and

To ensure compliance with the commitments undertaken by Mexico under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Proposed plan of action for the discouragement and eradication of child labour in Mexico

153. ILO recently adopted as one of its major policies the establishment of new standards for the elimination of extreme forms of child labour. This coincided with other international initiatives, such as those proposed at the meetings in Cartagena of the Wives of Latin American Heads of State and the Global March Against Child Labour. These are the guidelines which, in December 1998, the Mexican Government took into account in preparing a National Plan of Action for the Discouragement and Eradication of Child Labour.

154. Because of the extent and complexity of the phenomenon, the Plan includes activities which will be carried out under long-term policies incorporating specific short and medium-term activities, particularly in those areas where the greatest risks exist.

155. The aim is to construct a child labour policy based on ethical principles which protect the socially recognized rights of boys and girls. The policy should reaffirm the prohibition of work by children under the age of 14, should protect the employment of children between the ages of 14 and 16, and limit work by 16 to 18-year-olds. All this should be done in the light of the requirements of the Mexican Constitution.

156. The Plan envisages four courses of action:

Discouragement of work by new children under the legal age;

Disengagement of children from various kinds of work;

Regulation, protection and supervision of child labour;

Institution of legal proceedings to combat intolerable forms of child labour.

157. Activities will also have to include an information and awareness campaign, directed at all sectors of society, relating to the risks and consequences inherent in any early work by boys and girls, especially work not covered by existing legal provisions.

158. An information campaign must also be aimed at parents, businessmen, producers and officials in the labour department of the judicial system.

159. This Plan, which has been devised by DIF, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, IMSS, PGR, private-sector institutions, chambers of commerce and trade unions, will cover children living in urban and rural areas, and will be monitored by four working groups dealing with each of its activities and children in the following age brackets:

Boys and girls up to the age of five. It is proposed that federal and state criminal legislation should be amended so as to make work by children under the age six a criminal offence, to promote the establishment of day-care centres and to design an official Mexican standard to prevent these children from coming into contact with agrochemicals; they will not be allowed to accompany their parents in farming work.

Boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 13. It is proposed that the Federal Labour Act should be amended so as to double the penalties for employers who infringe the provisions relating to child labour, to establish compensation for the child concerned equivalent to six months' wages, to grant training scholarships payable by the employer and to establish assistance programmes.

Boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 16. It is proposed to amend the Federal Labour Act so as to specify restricted forms of employment for these children.

Boys and girls aged 16 or 17. It is proposed to design programmes for the inspection and supervision of work by this age group with local authorities, to double the penalties for employers who infringe the relevant labour regulations, and to identify job opportunities in the production sector.

B. Repatriated children

1. Background information

160. The frontier cities in northern Mexico are known to attract migrants who move there in search of opportunities. They are primarily characterized by the following features: they are poles of attraction because of their in-bond factories, with their high demand for labour, and are way stations on routes to the United States; their urban infrastructure is still insufficiently developed to meet the needs of these people; there has been an increase in extremely marginal, makeshift housing and social vulnerability, whose victims include street children, drug addicts and indigenous persons.

161. In the frontier region in the south of the country, the problems of children are closely linked to the widespread poverty and marginalization. Because of its geographical location, it is a transit area for the increasing migratory flows of Central Americans to the United States and Mexico.

162. Among the groups of minors at greatest risk, minors in the frontier areas constitute a special problem. They are more vulnerable for a number of different reasons: greater exposure

to drugs, greater opportunities for crime, early sexual experience and pregnancy, family break-up, violence and abuse, and, in the great majority of cases, exclusion from family and community.

163. This vulnerability is also reflected in difficulties of access to services in such areas as education, health, culture and recreation, in some cases it limits their rights, jeopardizes their physical and mental health, and causes them to suffer ill-treatment and occupational and sexual exploitation.

164. In this connection, a particularly striking phenomenon is that of migrant children returning from abroad. In most cases, they come from a situation of social backwardness, family disintegration and domestic violence which obliges them to leave the family and seek better opportunities elsewhere.

165. When deportations are effected at night and family members are separated, returning by different routes, returnees, and especially women and children, find themselves in a high-risk situation.

166. On the northern frontier, an estimated total of 80,000 migrant children were turned back by the frontier patrol between July 1996 and July 1997. Of these, 40 per cent were aged 16 or 17 and approximately half crossed the frontier alone. Another feature of returnees is that 8 out of 10 are male. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that, during the period 1990-1995, a total of 185,000 minors were repatriated through Mexican consulates.

167. Given this situation, it is essential to deal comprehensively with the problem of migrant children through specific policies embodying coordinated contributions by various government agencies and civil society.

2. Inter-Agency Project for the Care of Frontier Children

168. Within the framework of the Mexico-UNICEF Cooperation Programme (1996-2001), various members of the Sectoral Technical Committee for the Care of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances agreed, at a meeting on 25 June 1996, to channel and coordinate their activities through an Inter-Agency Project for the Care of Frontier Children.

169. In October 1996, this project was initiated with the aim of dealing comprehensively with the problem of the risks faced by vulnerable children living in Mexico's northern frontier region.

170. The Mexican government institutions participating in this project are the National Migration Institute (INM), a decentralized technical organ of the Ministry of the Interior, the General Coordinating Office for Protection and Consular Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), DIF with the related state and municipal systems, the National Indigenous Institute (INI) and the Juvenile Integration Centres.

171. Activities under this project began in the municipalities of Tijuana (State of Baja California), Nogales (State of Sonora), Ciudad Juárez (State of Chihuahua) and Matamoros (State of Tamaulipas).

172. As part of the project two meetings were held, one in Tijuana in October 1996 and the other in 1997, when the government and civil-society institutions concerned agreed to combine their efforts, capacities, experience, determination, concerns, powers and programmes of work.

173. As agreed at the first meeting concerning the planning of the project, four coordinating commissions were set up to deal with this group of children in the municipalities initially covered. Each of these commissions comprises different governmental and non-governmental institutions and operates differently, but with the aim of providing greater protection for frontier children.

174. As a result of the establishment of the commissions, migrant and repatriated boys and girls have received greater care, and a deeper knowledge of their problems has been acquired.

175. In addition, other cities near the northern frontier - Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña (State of Coahuila) and Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa (State of Tamaulipas) - have developed various activities designed to improve the situation of frontier children. Thanks to these activities, it has been possible rapidly to find the relatives of repatriated children and to send the children on to them in Mexico; if necessary, proper coordination is observed in transferring the children to hostels, hospitals or legal-advice institutions such as the Office of the Procurator for the Defence of Juveniles.

176. The second working meeting of the Inter-Agency Project for the Care of Frontier Children in the Northern Region, held in 1997, was attended by representatives of INM, the General Coordinating Office for Protection and Consular Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the National Population Council (CONAPO), DIF together with the respective state and municipal systems, INI and the Juvenile Integration Centres.

177. One of the objectives of this second meeting was to help to ensure the safe and orderly repatriation of minors from the United States, with full observance of the rights established by the relevant international instruments and laws.

178. The project has been extended to a further seven frontier towns which, although not yet experiencing equally severe problems, may well have to deal with them in the near future. These towns are Mexicali (State of Baja California), Ojinaga (State of Chihuahua), Agua Prieta (State of Sonora), Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña (State of Coahuila), and Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa (State of Tamaulipas).

3. Programme of collaboration and information exchange undertaken within the Inter-Agency Project for the Care of Frontier Children

179. This programme is being undertaken within the Inter-Agency Project for the Care of Frontier Children formulated by DIF, INM, CONAPO, the General Coordinating Office for Protection and Consular Affairs, INI, the Juvenile Integration Centres and UNICEF (Mexican section).

180. In view of the initiation of the various strategic frontier-control plans by the Government of the United States, the Mexican Government has undertaken new activities to resolve this problem.

181. At the first inter-agency meeting on frontier children it was agreed to establish a comprehensive care strategy aimed at these children, in the light of the specific problems existing at each frontier crossing and the competence and responsibilities of participating agencies. At the same meeting, stress was laid on the importance of establishing and operating inter-agency mechanisms at the local level, composed primarily of representatives of the participating agencies and civil society, in order to work in a coordinated fashion for the benefit of frontier children.

182. On the basis of the above-mentioned facts, the parties concerned signed the Collaboration and Information Exchange Programme under which the various agencies will:

Pool efforts, resources, experience and capacities, within the framework of their competence and functions, in order to promote at the local level activities and inter-agency coordination mechanisms that will guarantee the care required by frontier children, in particular those who, because of their migrant status, are repatriated through cities on the northern frontier;

Promote the establishment of necessary mechanisms for the safe and orderly reception, at all frontier crossing-points, of children repatriated through Mexican consulates in the United States;

Strengthen the process of forwarding and caring for these children, in accordance with the specific situation of each child, with the aim of enabling them to be reintegrated within their family and community;

Promote and support the establishment of a network of transit hostels for repatriated children, with the participation of NGOs and DIF systems at the corresponding state and municipal levels;

Implement a national information system on repatriated migrant children for the purposes of registration, protection, location and identification of relatives, through the ongoing exchange of each agency's databases;

Participate in the design and implementation of campaigns for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant and repatriated children, with the aim of increasing awareness among the general public, the security agencies and judicial authorities of the care which these children require; and develop prevention campaigns in the principal states from which they originate;

Reiterate to the United States authorities the need to comply with the binational agreements on mechanisms for the safe and orderly repatriation of Mexican children who have no identity papers;

Promote the coordinated operation, in accordance with the existing spheres of competence and capacities, of the procedures and certification for transfer to their place of origin of children originating from within Mexico;

Ensure observance of the rights of migrant and repatriated children, and their physical and moral security, through the Offices of the Procurator for the Defence of Juveniles and the Family (DIF) in frontier states and municipalities;

Design policies and undertake activities for the defence of the rights of frontier children; Formalize the establishment of a national technical committee, composed of representatives appointed by each of the parties, to regulate coordination and cooperation for the attainment of the objectives of this project in each frontier state, promote the formulation and implementation of specific programmes of work, and establish procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of agreed activities;

The agencies involved agree to formulate annual inter-agency work programmes for the care and protection of repatriated migrant children, on the basis of their respective areas of competence;

In accordance with this programme, the participating agencies undertake to analyse and evaluate, where necessary, the advisability of establishing an inter-agency coordination framework agreement to give legal support to the agreements and commitments arising from this project.

4. Agreement on Procedures for the Safe and Orderly Repatriation of Mexican Nationals, concluded with the United States of America

183. The Governments of Mexico and the United States have signed the Agreement on Procedures for the Safe and Orderly Repatriation of Mexican Nationals, which entered into force in February 1998. It was also signed by a number of states within Mexico, including those in which Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo are situated. The Agreement establishes, as one of its goals, preventing minors from being repatriated at night or without their families.

184. The Agreement further provides that minors unaccompanied by adults shall be handed over only at the times and places agreed and with the intervention of the Mexican consulate concerned.

185. It also stipulates that INM shall ascertain the state of health of returnees and that, if any person shows signs of ill-treatment or violation of his rights, he shall be assisted by INM personnel.

C. Disabled children

1. National Programme for the Educational Integration of Disabled Children and/or Children with Special Educational Needs (Ministry of Education)

186. As part of the educational integration strategy, and to improve the equality of education, as from 1995 the special education services have been reorganized so as to allow disabled children to follow the basic curriculum. In support of integration into ordinary schools, the Ordinary School Support Service Units (USAERs), formerly known as "Integrated Group Units", have been expanded. In order to deal with children in special circumstances, the former special education schools have been redesignated Multiple Care Centres (CAMs), while the Public Care Units serve to guide parents and persons who deal with children with special educational needs, whether or not they are disabled.

187. The USAERs constitute a source of technical-psycho-educational resources in support of educational integration. They are composed of teams of experts in various fields: teachers specializing in learning problems, psychologists, social workers and speech therapists. They serve as a liaison between ordinary schools and the special education services, and reinforce psycho-educational care in the classroom, guidance for parents and direct advice to teachers in order to achieve curricular flexibility.

188. The USAERs deal with special educational needs, taking the school curriculum as a basis and laying normalizing stress on the conditions of the school context in which the pupil develops.

189. Since 1995, considerable progress has been made in the reorganization of special education services. In the school year 1996/97 there were 1,382 USAERs, while in the following year the figure rose to 1,523. Similarly, the total of 910 CAMs during the school year 1996/97 rose to 980 by the following year.

190. The integration of disabled children has been gradual. Since 1995, approximately 20,000 children have been incorporated in the ordinary basic education system at the various levels, both in the full-time school system and the part-time system. In the ordinary system to date, 140 have been incorporated in initial education, 1,043 in pre-school education, 4,155 in primary education, 213 in general secondary education and 15,044 in technical secondary education. At present, in the USAERs, care is being provided to 105,660 children with special educational needs and 6,124 children with some form of disability.

191. With the aim of providing support for the increase in USAERs and CAMs, the number of special education teaching posts was increased by about 200 per cent during the school year 1997/98.

192. In order to facilitate the access of disabled children and young people to schools, school facilities are being physically modified. The Procurement and Public Works Act of 1995 lays down guidelines for the design, construction and adaptation of schools in order to eliminate physical barriers which prevent disabled boys and girls from moving around freely.

193. One of the most significant events during this period (up to September 1998) was the formulation of the School Consolidation Programme in the Federal District. This programme was introduced by the Federal District's Special Education Department and has the following aims:

To further the process of planning and evaluation of activities in schools;

To promote the autonomy of schools in the process of preparation and realization of activities;

To expand communication between the various hierarchical levels and levels of operation of the education services, in order to enable the school to enjoy a genuine capacity for innovation.

194. With a view to the early detection and care of disabled children at the national level, instruments for the identification of signs of disability are being developed for parents, teachers and USAER support staff.

195. In order to make progress in the establishment of normative criteria for the promotion and support of educational integration, procedures for registration, re-registration, accreditation and certification in State and private primary schools within the National Education System have been standardized (form 911). In addition, the General Guidelines for the Teaching Career have been amended in support of staff teaching disabled minors.

196. One of the most significant achievements in promoting the educational integration of disabled children was the holding of the "National Conference on Educational Care of Children with Special Needs: Fairness for Diversity" in April 1997, as a result of the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the National Education Workers' Union. With the aim of establishing consensus and joint action strategies, the Conference took up four major themes: updating professional training, operation of educational services, population and working materials.

197. In the area of technical education, the Ministry of Health, jointly with ILO, is undertaking a project comprising support for the normalized integration of disabled persons in vocational training institutions in Latin America. Under this project, the "national diagnosis" has been carried out and identified all disabled persons attending any vocational training institution in Mexico. This survey came up with a figure of 3,977 disabled young people currently receiving vocational training, which constitutes significant progress.

198. In support of the process of providing occupational training for disabled persons, under the Ministry-ILO project a pilot programme is being carried out on the basis of the results of the national diagnosis, in conjunction with various associations of disabled persons, DIF, NGOs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Conditions are being created for the integration of disabled persons in the Ministry of Education's rehabilitation and occupational training institutions, with the aim of enabling them to find jobs more easily. In addition, the Ministry of Labour is encouraging this process through the occupational training scholarship programme.

199. Under this project, there have been various awareness-raising, technical-advice and training activities for the heads of participating institutions, personnel directors, teachers, instructors, course coordinators and other members of the educational community to facilitate the integration of disabled young people in vocational training institutions. In this connection, four workshops on induction, refresher training and standard training have been held.

200. In connection with teacher training, the subject of special educational needs has been incorporated in the primary school curriculum. In order to provide refresher training for serving teachers, 46,349 books entitled "Disabled children and special educational needs" have been printed and distributed. A total of 2,117 catalogues on educational integration support materials and 622 packages of teaching materials mentioned in the catalogue have also been distributed. In addition, bibliographic information for use in standard and refresher training for special education teachers, relating to the integration of disabled minors and meeting special educational needs has been published in the states of Aguascalientes, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Jalisco, México, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, Veracruz, Zacatecas and the Federal District.

201. Nationwide distribution of 1,000 copies of the 13-programme series entitled "Challenges and responses" has been completed through the CAMs and USAERs. The purpose of these programmes is to inform and sensitize the educational community to the needs, capacities and skills of disabled children, young people and adults.

202. In order to promote the production of educational materials aimed at facilitating integration, two workshops have been held on "Toys for rehabilitation" in Mexico City and Pátzcuaro (State of Michoacán), they were attended by teachers from all over the country. With the aim of capitalizing on the workshop and reproducing toys used in the process of educational integration, a network of heads of special education resource centres has been established. And with the participation of designers from Germany, Canada, the United States, India, Bolivia, Argentina and Mexico, among other countries, the first UNESCO-sponsored Latin American symposium-workshop and exhibition entitled "Toys for rehabilitation" was held in Mexico City.

203. In order to provide guidance for support unit teachers on educational care for children in this category, a document entitled "Bases for the integration of boys and girls with special educational needs into ordinary schools" has been produced and distributed. In addition, to encourage the school community to work on educational integration, a series of interactive videos entitled "A school open to diversity" has been produced and will be distributed to all USAERs.

204. In order to promote the integration of persons with hearing difficulties, the Directorate-General for Vocational Training Centres has implemented the agreement with the National Association of Sign Language Interpreters in order to set up the training course for Mexican sign language interpreters, to be given by members of the Association.

205. An agreement has been signed between the Ministry of Education and the Ibero-American University to promote professional advancement in the area of the educational

integration for teachers and directors in the National Education System. In order to further the refresher training of teachers, a diploma on educational integration has been introduced, with the coordination of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

206. In order to make a favourable impact on the general public, as part of the "Education for society" project we are producing, in conjunction with the Latin American Institute for Educational Communication and the television station Canal 22, the series entitled "Education for the integration of disabled persons in society". The purpose of this series is to increase the awareness of the general public and to foster an attitude of acceptance and respect towards this social group. So far, videos have been produced which show successful experiments with, inter alia, disabled young people who have a job and blind children who attend school.

207. As an example of an activity undertaken by organized civil society, it should be mentioned that the Crecer Community Rehabilitation Centre has visited the following institutions where it has conducted awareness-raising, vocational-guidance, social-service and professional activities: the Ministry of Education's Specialized Teacher Training School, the UNAM's teacher training schools and the DIF rehabilitation schools.

208. The subject of disability has been incorporated in the National Creativity Competition organized by the National Directorate-General for Technologists.

209. With the aim of promoting the integration of visually-impaired children, an agreement has been concluded with the Spanish National Organization for the Blind (ONCE) for the reproduction of materials in Braille.

210. At the initiative of various states, conferences and seminars have been organized and held on the subject of educational integration in Aguascalientes, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Colima, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Quintana Roo, Sonora, Yucatán and Zacatecas.

211. In conjunction with the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, a programme has been initiated to update the research project on educational integration conducted by the Under-Secretariat for Primary Education and Teacher Training. It involves 336 teachers, heads and specialists from 52 schools in the states of Colima, San Luis Potosí and Tabasco.

212. In conjunction with the Organization of American States (OAS), an International Meeting for the Exchange of Experience with Educational Integration has been held. It was attended by specialized personnel from Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Mexico.

213. At the Regional Centre for Cooperation in Adult Education for Latin America (CREFAL) in Pátzcuaro (Michoacán), a workshop was held for the multilateral exchange of experience with educational integration in conjunction with the University of Arizona. It was attended by participants from Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Nicaragua and Uruguay, and teachers from special and ordinary schools in various parts of Mexico.

D. Educational programme of the Office for Preventive Measures and the Treatment of Juveniles, Ministry of the Interior (orientation and support modules)

214. The Ministry of the Interior comprises an Office for Preventive Measures and the Treatment of Juveniles, which has established 11 orientation and support modules in areas of the Federal District identified as places of origin of minors liable to engage in antisocial conduct. In these areas, an educational programme has been initiated covering such subjects as "Dealing with sexuality", "Sexuality in the adolescent" and "Rights and obligations of adolescents". In addition, in response to the growing demand for homes, since 1997 the subjects of "Prevention of sexual abuse in minors" and "Intra-family violence" have been included in the programme. Much of the content of these courses was taken from the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm (Sweden) in late 1996 and from information provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with the problem.

215. The aim of the education programmes is to reduce and prevent drug addiction, sexually transmissible diseases, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, and to curb the proliferation of street children, by increasing children's interest in cultural, recreational and sporting activities.

216. The Office also has five diagnosis and treatment centres whose main function is to secure, through individual sequential and interdisciplinary treatment, the integration of young offenders within society.

217. At these centres minors are provided with clothing, shoes, a bed, food, sports facilities, schooling and vocational training. They are taught by specialized personnel who enable them to make rapid progress in the course of the treatment followed, showing due respect for their human rights at all times.

218. Minors classified as street children account for only 3 per cent of the total number of children attending these centres. The offences they commit are not characterized as serious, and most are released without a treatment and detention order. The offence most frequently committed by these children is robbery in its various forms.

219. After treatment, released children are handed over to their relatives or guardians, who take them back to their homes. They are monitored for a period of six months, during which it is ascertained whether they have been successfully integrated within society. Statistics show that this is the case with approximately 94 per cent of these children. In the case of some released street children, it is known in advance that they have no relatives or guardians or that the latter are unwilling to take care of them; these children are sent to substitute homes or to institutions which provide them with the essential facilities for their social development and integration.

220. The Office also comprises a Department of Commissioners which takes responsibility for children. Its primary function consists in seeking justice through investigation of the offences recorded in the preliminary inquiries. These investigations are undertaken by the branches of the Public Prosecutor's Office specializing in minors and legally incompetent persons. The Department determines the legal situation of children brought before it within a period of 24 hours. There is also an Interdisciplinary Centre for External Treatment responsible for

providing treatment for those minors referred to it by decision of the unit counsellor, who is answerable to the Council for Minors. Minors in this category live with their relatives or guardians and are required, for at least six months, to receive, with their parents or guardians, various forms of therapy aimed at their proper social integration.

E. Establishment of programmes and agencies specializing in child-related matters

221. Stress should be laid on activities to ensure the protection of minors undertaken by DIF with the government procurators of the various states, with a view to the establishment of programmes and agencies specializing in child-related matters.

222. Prominent among these programmes is the DIF-PREMAN (Prevention of Maltreatment of Minors) programme conducted by the national DIF and the various state DIFs. In addition to dealing with complaints of ill-treatment of children and providing legal-assistance services through the Offices of the Procurators for the Defence of Juveniles, Women and the Family, the DIFs are promoting the installation of maltreated children's clinics. During 1997 and the first part of 1998, 81 such clinics were set up around the country with the aim of caring for children who are habitually subjected to emotional ill-treatment.

223. In order to enable the competent legal and judicial bodies to provide more humanitarian, efficient and prompt care for child victims and young offenders, 20 agencies specializing in child-related matters have been established in different states.

224. On 4 May 1998, the national DIF concluded a cooperation agreement with the Office of the Attorney-General of the Republic in order to undertake joint activities, to prepare and develop programmes, to promote the establishment of agencies for the care of victims of crime, and to disseminate a culture of crime prevention within the family and in social development centres all over the country. To this end, it was agreed to continue to increase the number of such agencies around the country and to organize training courses for staff of the Public Prosecutor's Office. The text of the cooperation agreement is attached.

225. In addition, the number of Procurator's Offices for the Defence of Juveniles, Women and the Family has been increased all over the country. At present there are 32 state procurator's offices and 731 municipal procurator's offices; they provide legal assistance and support for children and their families.

V. DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A. Civic Symposia Programme

226. In 1990, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) was created as an autonomous public body with its own legal personality and funds, and with responsibility for the organization of elections.

227. The aims of IFE are, inter alia, to contribute to the development of democracy, to oversee the proper and effective conduct of elections, and to assist in the promotion and dissemination of political culture, in accordance with the constitutional principles that govern its functions and the powers conferred upon it by the Electoral Code.

228. In this context, and in conformity with article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child it is essential for the State to recognize the importance of education in providing guidance on and inculcating respect for human rights, and in encouraging children to respect the cultural and national values of their own and other countries. The IFE Executive Directorate for Electoral Training and Civic Education has set up a "Civic Symposia Programme" for the promotion of democratic values and the rights of the child, the purpose being to train citizens interested in and capable of participating in building a more tolerant, pluralistic and free society. The Directorate has likewise encouraged children to take part in children's elections, which were held in Mexico in 1997.

229. IFE holds nationwide courses for the training of instructors in "civic symposia" for children and young people. The aim is to train teachers, students and persons interested in conducting them in schools or communities, with a view to transmitting the democratic values of society as a whole (respect, liberty, justice, pluralism, tolerance, dialogue, impartiality and participation, among others) and helping children to appreciate the importance of these basic values of democratic culture for life and harmonious relations, to reflect on these values and to be prepared to act in accordance with them.

230. The school thus becomes a suitable instrument for promoting a democratic culture, which must embrace aspects of human rights, peace, pluralism, cultural diversity and human development.

231. Civic education courses are given in primary and secondary schools to supplement the Ministry of Education curriculum and syllabuses for civics and Spanish.

232. The Civic Symposia Programme stresses the importance of ensuring that democratic values actually take on a meaning for each child; these values must therefore be made relevant to the events of the child's everyday life and be transmitted to the child by way of examples. The Programme provides for various activities (individual and group activities, games, discussions and experiments) to be carried out for a period of a week, with different schedules for primary school and secondary school children. The following are among the factors taken into account in the Programme's design: the process of development of the child; the child's interests at the various stages of his or her development; the child's social and individual needs; and his or her environment.

233. The Civic Education Programme includes four phases of instruction:

Sensitization: this enables the pupil to relate the values being taught to his or her everyday experience;

Awareness-raising: stage during which conceptual information is provided to help the pupil build a reference frame to guide his or her activities;

Application: the pupils consolidate and assimilate the knowledge acquired, and perform activities in which theoretical instruction is given practical meaning;

Evaluation: the pupils undertake a review of what they have learned.

At the end of each week the children are asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to obtain their views on the programme.

B. Children's elections

234. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the child's right to express his or her own views and states that these views must be taken into account in all matters affecting the child. To this end IFE, pursuant to its powers under the Constitution and the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures, administers ongoing programmes of civic education and political culture for the public at large.

235. IFE considers civic education as a process of training for citizens that utilizes the resources of formal and informal education to promote the values and practices of democracy and contribute to the building of civic capacities. It is a form of ongoing education that targets the population as a whole, including children and young people. Since democratic political culture, including its underlying principles and values, is the product of a learning process that requires not only their dissemination but also their exercise, IFE, in cooperation with UNICEF, on 24 April 1997 concluded an agreement on support for activities to promote civic education and political culture, thereby contributing to the recognition of children's rights in our country.

236. In this same context, IFE and UNICEF, drawing on recent experiences with the participation of children in elections in a number of Latin American countries, including Colombia, Ecuador and Chile, organized children's elections under the title "Democracy and children's rights". These elections were held on the same day as the election of the head of the Federal District government (6 July 1997) with the object of familiarizing children with the exercise of what will, in the future, be one of their basic political rights.

237. Children aged between 6 and 12 took part in the elections. Young persons aged between 13 and 17 wishing to participate did so as volunteer guides at polling stations, explaining to the children what rights they could vote for and how the election worked. The children voted for their rights as laid down by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in articles 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 37.

Aims of the children's elections

To disseminate knowledge of children's fundamental rights, as set forth in the Convention, and contribute to the recognition and protection of those rights;

To encourage Mexican children to learn about their civil rights and obligations, so that in the future they will exercise their rights as citizens and perform their obligations in a responsible, free, conscientious and informed manner;

To promote knowledge of the value of elections as a means of expressing one's preferences, and of respect for the opinions of others;

To create a forum for the participation of children to find out how they see, and what they think about, problems affecting them.

Rights for which children throughout the country voted

1. To be healthy and eat well;

2. To live in a quiet place with people who love me and will always take care of me;

3. To live in a place with clean air, water and land;

4. To be sure that no one will ever hurt or offend me;

5. To have a school in which to learn and improve myself;

6. To play, rest and meet other boys and girls;

7. To say what I think and feel, and have others listen to me;

8. To be treated fairly, as all children deserve to be treated, respecting our differences;

9. Not to work before the permitted age.

Election campaign

238. Various actions targeting the general public, and especially children, were undertaken two months before the elections. These included the production of publicity and promotional material, two posters with a print run of 250,000 copies, 600 banners publicizing the children's election, an "Elections are for us too" information leaflet for children, with a print run of 6 million copies, and a press kit with a print run of some 6,000 copies. Two radio messages and one television message were prepared, visits were made to the broadcasting media to invite them to cover the event, and announcements were placed in the main newspapers.

239. In addition to targeting children, the campaign addressed the parents and teachers responsible for transmitting democratic values and encouraging their children or pupils to take part in the exercise.

Invitation to other institutions

240. In order to provide information about the proposed children's elections, the Ministry of Education (SEP), DIF and CNDH were invited to a consultative meeting, following which SEP circulated about 400,000 copies of promotional material in various states and CNDH distributed materials to all the state human rights commissions.

241. At the same time, IFE and UNICEF, in cooperation with CDHDF, convened a meeting of approximately 60 NGOs to tell them about the project. CDHDF distributed materials in 700 schools in the capital and the IFE Coordinator for International Affairs contacted 17 election observer organizations for the same purpose.

Electoral process

242. IFE, through its diverse bodies and local and district councils, installed a total of 9,000 ballot-boxes countrywide, 30 in each of the 300 electoral districts, in heavily frequented areas. The polling stations were manned by a supervisor and volunteer guides, who received the ballot papers and provided information to the children coming to vote. Each child was handed a ballot paper listing the rights to be voted for. Afterwards the child was given a badge saying "I voted for my rights".

Outcome of the children's elections

243. A total of 3,709,704 children voted. This figure is a world record for children's elections. The children cast a total of 3,813,039 votes for the nine rights listed on the ballot paper. The figure does not coincide with the number of voters because multiple voting was allowed in some states and districts.

Number of votes obtained for each right at national level

To have a school in which to learn and improve myself: 837,173;

To live in a place with clean air, water and land: 527,336;

To be sure that no one will ever hurt or offend me: 501,682;

To live in a quiet place with people who love me and will always take care of me: 499,959;

To be healthy and eat well: 336,684;

To be treated fairly, as all children deserve to be treated, respecting our differences: 325,081;

To play, rest and meet other boys and girls: 276,704;

Not to work before the permitted age: 263,550;

To say what I think and feel, and have others listen to me: 244,870.

244. More detailed information on the election results is attached.

C. Inter-agency Joint Action Programme for the Rights of the Child and Democratic Values

245. The Inter-Agency Joint Action Programme for the Rights of the Child and Democratic Values is based on the Joint Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the Struggle against Violence, which was signed on 30 April 1998 on the occasion of Children's Day. IFE, SEP, DIF, CNDH, CDHDF and UNICEF are participating on a permanent basis in this initiative to promote knowledge of and protect children's rights, and to publicize the importance of democratic values as means of guaranteeing the exercise and observance of these rights.

246. The Programme derives from the children's elections, following which IFE and UNICEF convened a "Forum to Study the Children's Elections". At this forum the decision was taken to launch a campaign to publicize the rights of the child, with special emphasis on the prevention of violence and abuse. The original idea of the campaign was further developed and culminated in the adoption of the Inter-agency Joint Action Programme for the Rights of the Child and Democratic Values.

247. The participating institutions agreed to pool material and human resources, experience and capacities in order to provide inter-agency responses aimed at raising social awareness of the promotion and protection of children's rights, and preventing and dealing with any risks that children may face.

248. The Programme is justified by the many factors that can limit the exercise of the rights of children and at times impair their physical and mental health. Broad segments of society are not fully aware of the rights of the child and may, therefore, violate them in ways that could have repercussions on children's lives, development and socialization.

249. Moreover, violence not only jeopardizes family integration but also creates situations that give rise to concern, such as increasing child maltreatment or abuse and the problems of street children and children using drugs.

250. There are other areas apart from the home where children may be victims of physical or emotional ill-treatment, such as in schools, at the workplace or in health-care institutions. However, if such violence is first combated in the family setting, the future citizens will acquire greater self-esteem and this will contribute to reducing violence in relations outside the family.

251. The Programme guides families and society in general to respect the rights of the child, and actions are being planned up to the year 2000 to promote knowledge of these rights and the dissemination and practice of human and democratic values in daily life, as means of eliminating violence against children.

252. The goals of the Programme are to inform, guide and motivate citizens in general, and children in particular, so that they learn about and respect the rights of the child and understand the importance of applying human and democratic values as a condition for more harmonious social relations.

253. To achieve these goals:

Continuity will be ensured in educational work and publicity of the rights of the child and of democratic values;

The rights of the child will become a regular topic on the national public agenda, with emphasis placed this year on those rights which protect children from maltreatment, thereby addressing some of the concerns expressed in the children's elections;

It will be emphasized that children have rights and deserve to be cared for, protected and educated by their parents, teachers, government and society in general;

Children's self-esteem will be strengthened;

Efforts will continue to be made to promote knowledge and observance of democratic values as a condition for improving political culture in the medium and long terms;

Encouragement will be given, through institutional efforts, to work for the promotion of the rights of the child, democratic values and the practices associated with them.

254. The first action under this Programme was the outreach campaign entitled "Children's rights are not child's play", the purpose of which was to help build a new perception of the rights of the child among the general public, and to promote the practice of human and democratic values.

255. The campaign was conducted nationwide: 75,789 television messages and 142,788 radio messages were broadcast between June and September, and there were two spots with the captions "I don't want my Sunday with you, I want your Sunday with me" and "Adults are calling for an end to street violence, we children call for an end to violence in the home". A total of 200,000 posters with these messages were distributed throughout the country.

256. Subsequently, the National Rights of the Child Week was held from 23 to 29 November in conjunction with the ninth anniversary of the promulgation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Second Congress on Child Abuse, which included a performance of the play "Soñé que Nacía" with disabled child actors, was held in the course of the week.

257. Three work sessions were held during the Congress. The first was concerned with monitoring joint action for the "Proper treatment of children" and addressed issues such as domestic violence, abuse of disabled persons and the problem of children in institutional care. It highlighted the importance of strengthening measures to prevent child abuse and violence within the family, by encouraging new alliances and networks of institutions, including public, private and NGO-sponsored activities and efforts by the media and research institutes. The second session was concerned with "The analysis of progress in legislative reforms for the protection of child victims of abuse". The third session examined the topic of "The role of the school in the prevention and treatment of child abuse" and set the objective of creating programmes that would enable education workers to detect cases of child abuse.

258. The same Congress invited contributions for a journalism prize, to be awarded in April 1999; prizes were given for the educational game "No to child abuse and family violence" produced by the National School of Plastic Arts; a Latin American Seminar on Child and Youth Participation was held; and a "Paint your rights" project was organized at national level with the direct participation of children for a week.

259. In organizing the National Rights of the Child Week, the Inter-Agency Joint Action Programme enjoyed the cooperation of other agencies and institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary, the National School of Plastic Arts, the National Council for Culture and the Arts, and Channel 22.

D. Campaigns to promote the human rights of boys and girls

General objective of the campaigns

260. The objective of the campaigns (organized by DIF) is to encourage the development, within society, of a culture of respect for boys and girls in order to guarantee the full exercise of these rights as a basis for a democratic society. This culture of respect for children is to be achieved by promoting discussion and ascertaining children's views about their rights and the problems facing them, and enabling them to enjoy their childhood through recreation, sports and culture.

261. Another aim is to ensure that the community contributes to the dissemination and protection of the rights of the child. Forums will be organized for children aged 8 to 13 to express their views.

262. Social mobilization, involving children, young persons, families, communities, the media, government and legislatures, is being encouraged in order to obtain specific commitments for the observance of those rights which children themselves see as being of the greatest importance for them.

Key issues

263 The key issues of these campaigns are the rights voted for by children on 6 July 1997, including the right to social welfare and proper treatment, the right to a family and the right to be heard.

Courses of action

Children's forums with interactive workshops;

Dissemination of the rights of the child;

Dialogue with the various segments of society;

Discussion of the present status of children's rights in forums and conferences;

Cultural and recreational activities.

Dates of civic campaigns

At municipal level, from 3 to 5 April;

At state level, from 13 to 19 April;

At national level, on 30 April, when Children's Day is celebrated in Mexico.

Other campaigns will be held in the future.

Impact of the campaigns

Children's forums:

Municipal phase: 30,000 children, at least 150 per municipality;

State phase: 10,000 children, 325 per state;

National phase: between 300 and 500 minors.

Social mobilization:

32 meetings with governors;

32 meetings with deputies;

32 meetings with state human rights commissions;

200 meetings with town councils;

200 media, television, radio and press encounters;

10,000 families mobilized.

264. DIF prepared posters, leaflets, descriptive charts and other materials on the rights of the child.

E. International seminar entitled "Our young women: right to equity from childhood"

265. An international seminar entitled "Our young women: right to equity from childhood" was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) in Mexico City from 5 to 7 August 1998. The seminar, organized by SRE and CONMUJER, focused mainly on analysing the conditions experienced by girls in the areas of education, health, work, violence and the family and by girls of indigenous origin, and emphasized the importance of including a gender approach in public policies.

266. Government agencies and NGOs participated in this seminar, where emphasis was placed on the importance of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which must be incorporated in national legal systems and serve as a framework for national policies. The conclusions of the seminar on each of the areas considered are attached.

F. Seminar on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, International Experience and a Plan of Action for Mexico

267. This Seminar, held on 12 and 13 August 1998, was coordinated by the National DIF with the participation of state DIFs and NGOs. Its purpose was to examine the current situation in Mexico and to institute measures to prevent and combat any kind of exploitation involving children, such as child prostitution, trafficking in children, and the use of minors in pornography and sex tourism.

268. It was emphasized at the seminar that the Government must recognize the phenomenon of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors as a reality of growing and permissive proportions in our society, and therefore ensure that adequate measures are taken to deal with this serious social problem.

269. Four practical recommendations were made at the seminar:

Preventive measures: call on NGOs to devise strategies to assist high-risk families, and set up various information forums;

Protection measures: hold training courses for public prosecutors and create agencies specializing in minors throughout the country; promote the adoption of regulations for hotels and bars to control the admission of minors, and supervise their enforcement; and standardize the age of criminal responsibility nationwide at 18 years;

Rehabilitation and reintegration measures: address the problem from the individual, family, legal and community standpoints; provide training for staff of public and private organizations;

Child and youth participation: carry out surveys on the subject, provide information, promote the creation of youth counselling and parental guidance services, and maintain contact with the young persons and children concerned.

270. The seminar provided further input for the proposed Plan of Action to Prevent, Address and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, by seeking the views and advice of experts in the field for the formulation of its general guidelines.

G. Activities to promote the rights of the child undertaken by the Casa del Árbol

271. The Casa del Árbol ("Treehouse") is a forum that the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District has organized for children living in Mexico City. It is an educational facility in which children are told about, learn how to preserve and protect the culture of human rights. It

was set up to cater for public and private schoolchildren, and children in especially difficult circumstances, including street children, children of indigenous origin and children suffering from disabilities or HIV/Aids. Its central aim is to foster respect for tolerance, plurality and other basic values such as dignity, equality, justice, peace and liberty, so that the children will adopt them as integral parts of their everyday lives.

272. The Casa del Árbol has been enriched with the experience of designers who, from the perspective of the rights of the child, have prepared a series of exhibitions and interactive games centred on Mexican legislation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and emphasizing human values.

273. This forum is intended especially for children aged 6 to 15, who learn about their rights and at the same time become aware of their concomitant duties, the purpose being to foster harmonious and civil relations and encourage the application of what has been learned as an alternative solution for the specific problems facing the children.

274. This work is conducted in accordance with a strategy that makes it possible for visiting children - whether from public or private schools, religious associations, hostels, NGOs or other private welfare institutions - to appreciate the importance of learning about their rights and knowing how to protect them; they are also given ideas to help them face situations of violence in the family, at school or in other public places. The fact that the children are informed about and know their rights and entitlements under national and international laws enables them to create something very positive out of a situation that does not always auger well.

275. By 1998 the Casa del Árbol had been visited by 114,453 children: 51,170 from public schools, 27,295 from private schools, 23,620 from public agencies and 12,368 from NGOs.

276. One of the six exhibitions at the Casa del Árbol is the exhibition of grievances, which provides young visitors with the opportunity to give their views, without fear of the authorities, and express their doubts regarding everything that annoys, worries or even hurts them, such as the phenomena of maltreatment and violence in the home, at school on the street. The children write down their grievances and these are analysed so that action can be taken more quickly to address those deserving immediate attention.

277. The Casa del Árbol keeps a record of such grievances so as to provide statistics for short and medium-term action for the benefit of the capital's children in the various spheres in which they are affected. The most significant figures up to 1998 are as follows: physical abuse (27.81 per cent), verbal abuse (11.08 per cent), emotional abuse (4.50 per cent), sexual abuse (2.19 per cent), abuse of authority (0.76 per cent), discrimination (1.87 per cent), robbery (14.26 per cent), lack of educational opportunities (3.63 per cent), obstruction of free expression (2.32 per cent), living in a place where the air, water and land are clean (0.25 per cent), and protection against drugs (0.53 per cent).

278. One of the objectives of the grievances exhibition is to develop a culture of reporting whereby children can speak freely and secure the observance of their rights. Through actions of this kind it is hoped to raise public awareness of the fact that all children and adolescents in our country deserve to be loved, cared for and respected.

Supplementary activities carried out by the Casa del Árbol

279. In order to enable children to express and discuss their experiences regarding their rights, a children's forum entitled "Children on childhood" was held in connection with the second anniversary of the Casa del Árbol. The forum was attended by children aged between 6 and 15 of various origins, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. All of them gave live testimony of the need to respect their rights, and made comments and suggestions on how to strengthen the civic culture of Mexican children. Five institutions represented by 200 children took part in this encounter.

280. Special activities included visits to the Casa del Árbol by 228 persons from seven local government districts. Training was provided for 100 parents and for 60 teachers from various schools in the capital, on the basis that rights and human values must be experienced in one's own family and school environment.

281. The holding of a teachers' forum enabled us to follow up the objectives of the Casa del Árbol, which include strengthening the impact this educational facility has had on the children visiting it. For that purpose, educators were approached and asked to take part in the forum, since they are the persons best equipped to meet the challenge of protecting and disseminating a human rights culture among pupils and in society as a whole. In this forum the teachers were free to express their views and share their valuable experiences with all of their colleagues during the work sessions, and were able to appreciate that, notwithstanding their different ways of living and thinking, it is possible to engage in a broad discussion of the issues without any discrimination, and thus reach conclusions that promote the rights of children and teachers within the school environment. This event was attended by 150 teachers from public and private schools at the primary and secondary level, as well as 50 street educators and persons committed to protecting children's rights.

282. The Human Rights Commission of the Federal District, in coordination with the United Nations Information Centre and the Autonomous National University of Mexico, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with academic and cultural activities including the "Paint your rights" project, in which 150 children from five educational institutions and a number of NGOs collaborated to make a moving mural. The technique of active participation enabled the forum to produce drawings to publicize children's rights and call on society as a whole to respect and observe them.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

283. As can be seen from the report submitted to the Committee in January 1998 and from this supplementary report, the Government of Mexico has strengthened measures to give genuine effect to the provisions of the Convention for the benefit of Mexican children.

284. Particularly noteworthy are the recent measures described in this supplementary report, which demonstrate that efforts have been redoubled and accelerated in areas of particular concern, such as legislation and other steps to combat child pornography, child prostitution and child labour.

285. The creation of the System for Follow-up and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Convention will make it possible to evaluate the progress made and to identify areas where greater efforts are required in order to secure the implementation of this international instrument.

286. The Government will continue to attach priority in its national agenda to the well-being of children. Promoting and protecting the rights of the child set forth in the Convention are, without doubt, central to the achievement of that objective.

287. The Government realizes that there are many obstacles yet to be overcome and that many children are still far from being able to exercise their rights under the Convention. However, the Government is redoubling its efforts to give effect to the provisions of this invaluable legal instrument.

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